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# Intelligence Report

*Soviet Naval Strategy: Concepts and Forces  
for Theater War Against NATO*

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## Soviet Naval Strategy: Concepts and Forces for Theater War Against NATO

### Principal Conclusions

During the past decade, Soviet naval strategy has given indications of becoming more flexible regarding the possible course of a theater war with NATO. [redacted] naval operations in such a war probably would evolve in up to five stages:

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- a period of rising tensions during which surveillance operations would begin
- a possible period of conventional (nonnuclear) hostilities
- possibly a period of limited nuclear operations in Europe, which probably would be accompanied by widespread nuclear operations at sea (Nuclear war at sea during a conventional conflict in Europe probably is not currently an element of Soviet strategy.)
- theater-wide nuclear war
- a concluding phase during which the winning side would consolidate its gains.

Soviet and other Warsaw Pact naval forces are organized into several theater commands for war with NATO. Each theater naval command has several wartime missions to which forces must be allocated. Soviet planners probably believe that the forces currently earmarked for each theater are adequate to defend Pact territory against seaborne attack and to limit damage from carrier-based aircraft strikes [redacted]

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Likely future developments in Soviet naval strategy for theater war against NATO include:

- greater emphasis on open-ocean antisubmarine warfare
- greater use of submarine-launched ballistic missiles in theater war
- development of increased capabilities for conventional war at sea.

The Soviets might also adopt a doctrine permitting nuclear operations at sea during conventional hostilities on land in Europe. This could be done in reaction to Western discussions of such a strategy or in realization of the advantages that selected nuclear strikes at sea would have over limited nuclear attacks on land—for example, the absence of a collateral damage problem.

These considerations probably will stimulate Soviet production of attack submarines, high-endurance surface ships, and strike and antisubmarine aircraft, as well as provisions for logistic support.

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